

EXHIBIT C

Richard Gadd

Interview

Richard Gadd on his stalker: 'It would be unfair to say she was awful and I'm a victim'

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The soul-baring comedian has turned his experience of being stalked into a gripping piece of theatre, *Baby Reindeer*



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It had all ended so well. When Richard Gadd [won the Edinburgh Comedy award](#) three years ago with *Monkey See Monkey Do*, it wasn't just a professional triumph, but a very personal one. His [early multimedia comedy](#) traded in sick humour and grindhouse gags, and fixated – more, surely, than was healthy – on male sexuality and sexual violence. Then came this extraordinary confessional show about his experience, deeply sublimated in his previous work, as [a victim of sexual assault](#). It was emotionally naked, strayed far beyond humour's usual remit – and when it won the biggest prize in comedy, it was a redemption for Gadd and catharsis for his audience.

Or so it seemed at the time. One of the many shocks in Gadd's [new show *Baby Reindeer*](#) is that it steals away this happy ending. The demons of sexual abuse are not, it turns out, the only demons the Scotsman had to grapple with. *Baby Reindeer* – Gadd's first solo theatre show – is about his experience of being stalked. It's gone on for years. It is (give or take a legal technicality) still going on. And it entered a traumatic new stage only weeks after Gadd's 2016 award triumph, when he thought he'd put the worst of his troubles behind him.



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Edge-of-the-seat stuff ... Gadd performs Baby Reindeer in Edinburgh this summer. Photograph: Andrew Perry

“That was the worst part,” he says now. “It felt like I’d expunged the demons of one person who had caused me so much grief, only so that she [his stalker] could take centre stage in his place. It felt so *awfully* ironic.” The 30-year-old is talking at the Edinburgh fringe, at which Baby Reindeer was both sell-out and talking point. For legal reasons, he must be careful what he says – but the

gripping, gruelling show speaks volumes about the harassment he's suffered. It's edge-of-the-seat stuff, it's a plea for a new legal approach to stalking – and it's a murky account of two damaged souls unable to escape one another's grip.

That moral muddiness is what gives the show its particular charge. Gadd almost staged it a year ago, but postponed – because he got an acting job on BBC teen thriller [Clique](#), but also because “I hadn't quite grasped it yet. If I'd rushed it a year ago, it would have just been a victim narrative. And everyone would have come out saying ‘oh you're so brave, and well done for doing this’.”

Which is emphatically *not* the show he went on to make. “It would be unfair to say she was an awful person and I was a victim,” says Gadd. “That didn't feel true.”

One complicating factor is gender: Gadd's story reverses the usual male/female roles in harassment narratives. While there were points when he feared for his personal safety (“Absolutely. Loads of times”), he was physically stronger than his tormentor. But emotionally – not so much. In *Baby Reindeer*, Gadd portrays himself as a very troubled man, failing to come to terms with his assault, wrestling with his sexuality, weirdly flattered by the interest of this woman he first meets in his casual job working at a bar. In the audience, we know she's trouble. So it's excruciating to watch Gadd, time after time, make disastrous choices about how to deal with her.

“I did loads of things wrong,” he admits, “and made the situation worse. I wasn't a perfect person [back then], so there's no point saying I was. And I know as I'm doing those sections that people are thinking I'm not a nice person – which make them difficult to perform.” The show has been only lightly fictionalised, says Gadd. “The skeleton of the story is absolutely true,” but it wasn't this morbidly thrilling in real life. “The feeling you get most of all when you're getting harassed is relentless tediousness and frustration. I didn't want the audience to feel that.”

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With director Jon Brittain, Gadd has created a vice-like production that depicts his dialogues with “Martha”. It scrolls their text and email exchanges above our heads (Gadd received 41,000 emails over three years), broadcasts her abusive voicemails, and plays vocal testimonies from bit-part players (Gadd's parents, his landlord, his girlfriend) in the drama. It also dramatises

his desperate encounters with the police, who tell Gadd they can't help him until Martha issues an explicit threat of violence.

"I was getting told off for harassing the police about being harassed," says Gadd. In *Baby Reindeer*, the law starts to feel like Martha's accomplice in the abuse, as Gadd is forced – at the cost of his fragile confidence – to listen to hours of insulting voicemail daily, sifting it for the unguarded remark that might tip Martha's behaviour into criminality. "I've been through two police investigations in my life," says Gadd, "and they've both been hilarious, fly-on-the-wall terrible. Honestly my advice to someone who ever thought of pressing charges would be: it's a fucking nightmare process, and it takes years."



[View image in fullscreen](#)

Moving ... Monkey See Monkey Do was performed on a treadmill. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

It's his frustration at how stalking is policed, he says – and he cites the recent high-profile case of [Shana Grice's murder by her ex-boyfriend](#) – that compelled Gadd to bring his story to the stage. He can't have done so lightly. As the show makes clear, Martha – while now, finally, restrained from contacting the artist himself – is still at large, and until recently has been harassing his friends and family. Might not publicising the story risk escalating her activities?

“I have to admit that it hasn't,” he says, cautiously. “Maybe seeing this in the press has made her think twice about her behaviour.” At any rate, making the show was a risk worth taking, “a last roll of the dice” to highlight the weak laws around harassment, and the injustice whereby “if you harass someone and the police tell you to stop – well, what's to stop you harassing someone else in their life? And that's the other person's problem. To me that seems unfair – and a story worth telling.” But it's also about highlighting that harassers may need care more than punishment. “She needs help,” says Gadd of his stalker, “but she's not getting any. So her instability would just come down the phone at me every day.”

It can't be easy reliving the experience in the present tense every night on stage – particularly given the knife-edge intensity of Gadd's performance. Surprisingly, he says that (as he did with *Monkey See Monkey Do*) he finds it therapeutic – with the exception of the moments when his parents speak (“I struggle with the massive toll this has taken on them”). It's certainly a far cry from his days as a comedian, when laughter rather than terror was his stock-in-trade.

Given the success of the serio-comic [Monkey See Monkey Do](#), I wonder whether Gadd considered making *Baby Reindeer* as a comedy show. The answer is a resounding no. It was hard enough with his award-winning one, he says: “I remember feeling daunted as I was making it, thinking, ‘I'm going to have to make the ramifications of sexual abuse funny.’” With *Baby Reindeer*, “where are the laughs, really? Am I making fun of her? Am I making fun of the situation? I just thought it was a layer too far if I tried to put jokes in this.”



[View image in fullscreen](#)

Emotional intensity ... publicity for Gadd's 2015 show *Waiting for Gaddot*

It leaves Gadd at a curious career juncture, as a successful joker now more celebrated for the psychological and emotional intensity of his work. “The comedian label always sat uneasily with me,” he says now. “There’s the image the public has of a comedian as a man at a microphone, and that’s quite far away from anything I ever did.”

And yet... He’s still rankled by the criticism *Monkey See Monkey Do* received (as [Hannah Gadsby’s Nanette](#) did the following year) for being more theatre than comedy, and he defends the place of seriousness and emotional honesty in the comedian’s toolbox. “It’s weird: if a theatre piece uses humour, you don’t go, ‘Get thee to a Jongleurs’. I don’t know why we’ve come to think that comedy has to be all about gag rate.”

But he’s not ruling out a return to live comedy: he still has “a few stupid comedy ideas”, itches he wants to scratch. Until then, his greater ambition is adapting his work – including *Baby Reindeer* – for TV, having recently written for *The Last Leg* and Netflix hit [Sex Education](#). It’s a slog. “I think people see me as slightly mad,” he says. “Almost like a quarantine section: good to look into for a while, but best not to open it up fully. I think people worry the dark stuff I make will be too strong a brew in this climate,” he says. But that’s the stuff he’s got to make, he says – “so I won’t stop trying”.

[Baby Reindeer is at the Bush Theatre, London, 9 October-9 November.](#)